



# Environmental News

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## **EPA EXPANDS CONTROLS ON POLLUTED RUNOFF TO FURTHER PROTECT NATION'S DRINKING WATER AND WATERWAYS**

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today announced another significant action under President Clinton's Clean Water Action Plan to protect America's drinking water and waterways by curbing one of the greatest remaining sources of water pollution -- storm water runoff.

EPA announced it would reduce storm water runoff from construction sites between one and five acres and municipal storm sewer systems in urbanized areas serving populations of less than 100,000. This new storm water rule builds on the existing program to control storm water runoff from municipalities with populations greater than 100,000 and 11 industrial categories, including construction disturbing over five acres.

EPA Administrator Carol M. Browner, said: "The Clinton-Gore Administration is committed to reducing one of the largest remaining sources of water pollution, storm water runoff. Today we are taking a major step to protect public health and the environment for America's families -- increasing the safety of the water they drink, and the rivers, lakes and beaches they enjoy."

Storm water is water from rain or snow that runs off of city streets, parking lots, construction sites and residential yards. It can carry sediment, oil, grease, toxics, pesticides, pathogens and other pollutants into nearby storm drains. Once this polluted runoff enters the sewer system, it is discharged -- usually untreated -- into local streams and waterways.

A leading public health and environmental threat, storm water runoff can contaminate drinking and recreational waters. It also remains a major source of beach and shellfish bed closures. Storm water runoff washes sediment from construction sites at a rate of 20 to 150 tons per acre each year. Sediment has been identified as the single largest cause of impaired water quality in rivers and the third largest cause of impaired water quality in lakes.

The new storm water Phase II rule is expected to make approximately 3,000 more river miles safe for boating and protect up to 500,000 people a year from illness due to swimming in contaminated waters. It will prevent beach closures, make fish and seafood safer to eat, and reduce costs of drinking water treatment. Under the expanded program, sediment discharges from approximately 97.5 percent of the acreage under development across the country will be controlled through permits.

Today's new storm water regulations will control the impacts of storm water runoff

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through the issuance of discharge permits under the Clean Water Act. Permits are expected to be issued for at least 110,000 additional construction sites and over 5,000 municipalities across the country. Facilities and sites will have three years and 90 days to obtain these storm water permits.

The Phase II permitting program has been structured for maximum flexibility. Focusing on “best management practices,” each permittee will be able to select those options resulting in the most common sense, cost-effective plan for reducing storm water runoff on a case-by-case basis. Examples of best management practices include filter fences, storm drain inlet protection, and temporary mulching and seeding for construction sites, as well as public education programs, storm sewer inspections and local storm water ordinances for municipal programs.

The new rule also provides incentives for industrial facilities to protect their operations from storm water exposure. At least 70,000 industrial facilities will be able to take advantage of this new permitting exemption by protecting their operations from storm water, such as covering operations under a storm resistant shelter.

The proposed storm water Phase II rule was issued in January 1998. Both the proposed and final rules were developed with extensive public outreach and communication, including consultation with a wide cross-section of interested stakeholders. There was a 90-day public comment period on the proposed rule, during which EPA received approximately 500 comments.

The final storm water Phase II rule will be published in the Federal Register within the next two weeks. A copy of the rule and additional information is available on the Internet at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/owm/sw/phase2>.